

However, the largest class of pamphlets consists of the controversial tracts in which representatives of some party or section of a party set forth their views on the political situation, or on some particular measure which was before the country, or on the principles of politics in general. These Macaulay uses with great skill as evidence of the feelings and opinions of the people about public questions, and his usual method is to summarise in a rhetorical form the arguments brought forward on either side. The best examples of this are : the arguments for and against requiring the clergy to take an oath of fealty to William and Mary—a measure which led to the non-juring schism ;¹ the summary of the arguments for and against opening the East India trade ;² the account of the ' literary conflict ' about the maintenance of a standing army.³

It is obvious that all these controversial publications are better evidence for feelings and opinions than for facts, and Macaulay was very well aware of it. More than once he points out the untrustworthiness of the pamphlets as evidence against the government of William III, Discussing the effect of the cessation of the censorship in 1695 he says :

The pamphleteers were under less restraint than the journalists : yet no person who has studied with attention the political controversies of that time can

have failed to
 perceive that the libels on William's person
 and government were decidedly less coarse and
 rancorous during the
 latter half of his reign than during the
 earlier half. And
 the reason evidently is that the press, which
 had been
 fettered during the earlier half of his reign,
 was free during
 the latter half. While the censorship existed,
 no tract
 blaming, even in the most temperate and
 decorous lan-
 guage, the conduct of any public department,
 was likely to

¹IV, 1707-13 (xiv).

³ V, 2106-10 (xviii).

³ VI, 2736-42 (xxiii).